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SUBJECT: Pres. Bashir Interview with Al-Jazira at Arab
League Summit

11. Summary: In a March 29 interview with Al-Jazira, President Bashir said: many southern forces had supported the government during the North-South civil war; Khartoum was both a northern state and the national capital subject to shari'ah law; the Arab League had pledged to support AMIS financially for six months and to provide additional troops; the U.S. had interest in Sudan in terms of both it as an electoral issue and for the sake of its oil; international peacekeeping troops would come to Darfur to stay and not to end the conflict there; the situation in Darfur was mischaracterized and did not involve mass killings; use of development assistance funds would keep Sudan united; and CPA implementation has been slowed by a variety of factors, due both to the actions of the North and the South. End summary.

12. Following the March 28-29 Arab league heads of State Summit, Al-Jazirah television interviewed President Bashir. The lengthy interview touched on a variety of sensitive issues, including Darfur, international peacekeeping troops, U.S. interests in Sudan, the North-South situation, and the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA). Media reactions to President Bashir's statements will follow by septel. Selected excerpts are as follows:

(Begin text excerpts)

Sudan's South:

Regrettably, the media depicted the issue of the South as a problem between an Arab Muslim North and a black Christian South. If one looks at the formation of the fighting forces, he will discover that they do not reflect the picture some try to draw. There were large southern forces which supported the government. All the people heard about the militias. These were one of the security problems. These were huge militias in large numbers. They represented very influential tribes in the South. These militias fought alongside the government troops. We say the problem is now over, praised be God. That problem caused us much trouble with many African countries. They sympathized with the (Sudan) People's (Liberation) Movement and (words indistinct). This has ended, praised be God. After reaching peace in the South, we have become more qualified to be an element of support for Arab-African relations.

The agreement (CPA) is very clear. The agreement resulted in an interim constitution. According to the constitution, every state has the right to have its own constitution but within the framework of the federal constitution. I reject such talk (of the constitution of

Khartoum being Taliban in nature). If talk is about our adherence to the shari'ah (Islamic law), that will then not be something new. In the agreement we stressed that Islamic shari'ah is the source of legislation in northern Sudan. Khartoum is a northern state and at the same time it is the national capital.

The agreement gave the capital other things. It said the representation of the South in Khartoum will be different from its representation in the rest of states. We have reached agreement on this representation in Khartoum with the People's Movement. The second point is that a committee will be set up to guarantee the rights of non-Muslims in Khartoum. If the people who talk want the constitution of Khartoum to be secular, there will be no need for a special committee to protect the rights of non-Muslims. This means the constitution is Islamic and the laws are Islamic. But under this Islamic constitution and these Islamic laws a committee was set up to protect the rights of non-Muslims in Khartoum.

AMIS Support:

With regard to financial aid, a figure was mentioned, but in internal deliberations the conferees said what is required is covering the expenses of troops for six months. This is what was mentioned in the resolution. It said the Arab countries will cover the expenses of the African forces in Darfur for six months as of 1 October...There is talk about increasing the number of these troops. The number of the additional troops has not been decided. Therefore, it is difficult to fix a sum. The Arab countries pledged to pay the cost for six months.

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There is talk about sending Arab African peacekeeping forces to Darfur. These are African forces from Arab African countries. These countries will decide the size of these forces. All the Arab African countries like Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, (words indistinct) which has still not become a full African Union member, and Mauritania. These are the countries with military capabilities. There are Egyptian observers in Darfur now. The Libyans are there. These are Egypt, Libya, and Algeria.

U.S. Interests in Sudan:

This question (of U.S. pressure) should be directed to the Americans. Our problems have become one of the elements of the U.S. domestic policy. Whenever there are elections in the United States, some files become part of the election campaign. Regrettably, we have become part of the files of these election campaigns. Certainly there are political forces and forces of pressure in the Congress and in the U.S. media which talk about Darfur. The problem is that we have become part of the internal electoral files.

Sudan's geographic location is very important. We are located in the heart of Africa and overlook nine African countries and the Red Sea. Sudan has huge resources. It has oil, gas, and minerals of all types. Sudan has water sources and fertile soil. All these are the object of the ambitions of others. If we look at the map of Africa, we will find that the countries where there are big problems are the ones with large capabilities. You will find Congo, which has a huge wealth of gold and diamond. You will find Angola and Sudan. I recall that once a company contacted the Senegalese president offering to prospect for oil in Senegal, but he said I do not want problems; I do not want prospecting. This is one thing. The other thing is the position of Sudan. We have an independent political position. We rejected many

of the U.S. policies in the region. We strongly rejected the invasion of Iraq. We continue to reject all calls to recognize Israel or normalize relations with it. All these create a political force targeting Sudan within the United States and for all sorts of reasons. I will give you a simple example. Oil in Sudan was discovered by U.S. firms. They came and prospected for oil. They dug tens of wells. They might have defined the oil reserves. At that time they had enough oil and did not need additional oil. They left in the hope of returning. We heard from some Americans that this is American oil and they will not leave it to the Chinese, Malaysians, and others.

We are an independent country and we will protect our independence and sovereignty. We will not accept any decision related to us if we do not approve it.

International Peacekeeping Forces in Darfur:

This is because we believe that these (international peacekeeping) forces will come to Darfur to stay there and not to solve the problem. The issue of Darfur began as a local traditional problem which took place there from time to time and it was solved traditionally. There was war in the South. Therefore, they (western powers) did not care about problems in other places. They thought that the problem or the war in the South would be enough for them to achieve all their aims in subjugating or defeating the Khartoum government and even occupying Khartoum through the rebel movement. When operations continued and the initiative was completely in the hands of the armed forces, we heard the western countries -- the United States, Britain, and their allies -- talk about a cease-fire in the South for the first time. When we began negotiations, we called for a cease-fire in the South. The strange response was fight and talk (preceding three words in English as heard). This is so although when any mediator intervenes to resolve any armed conflict in the world, the first thing he will demand is observing a cease-fire. This happens everywhere except in Sudan. After making sure that peace was inevitably coming to the South and that three days remained to sign the protocols which constituted the basic peace agreement, we heard that the issue of Darfur was referred to the UN Security Council. They knew that the problem there would not last long unless there was an international interference that would impose certain conditions. We fought for 50 years in the South, but the

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issue was not referred to the UN Security Council. The issue (of Darfur) was referred to the UN Security Council only when we were about to reach peace (in the South) so that they would say after interference that they wanted peace before the end of the year. They fabricated this issue. If we sign a peace agreement in Darfur today, there will be plans for other areas. These plans are made outside Sudan.

Therefore, we have to face our destiny and try to solve our problems by ourselves. We will not accept any solutions from abroad.

If things are imposed on Sudan, it will have no other option but confrontation. If things are imposed on it, what can it do? It must either confront or surrender. We will not surrender. We do not know who will finally be victorious because victory comes only from God. This is what is required. No forces should come without our approval and we have not approved the dispatch of such forces.

Also not in the future. As happened in the South, we can think of the role the United Nations can play once peace is reached. After agreeing on peace in the South, we

agreed on a role by the United Nations. There are UN troops in the South now, but they are there with our approval and upon our request and authorization.

We do not deny that there is a crisis in Darfur. There is a problem and there are refugees and refugee camps, but maintaining the problem is a deliberate action. In April 2004, we signed the cease-fire agreement in N'djamena. The agreement had specific clauses demanding the rebels to identify their positions and the points where forces could be assembled. Simultaneous collection of weapons in Darfur would then begin. There was procrastination or lack of desire on the part of the international community to implement this agreement. If this agreement had been implemented and positions had been defined (changes thought). On the first day we handed the African Union a map of all positions of the Sudanese Armed Forces. The rebels should have done the same. They should have revealed the positions of their forces. Agreement would then have been reached on specifying the forces' assembly points. If the forces had been assembled, security chaos in Darfur would have completely ended. If security chaos had ended, the humanitarian issue would have been solved automatically because the people evacuated the area because of the chaotic security situation. Why do we not implement the signed agreement? If we implement it, the crisis of Darfur will end. Envoys came and visited the evacuees' camps. Yes, there are evacuees. But if we implement the N'djamena agreement, the evacuees will return to their areas.

These (reports of killings and other abuses) are all lies. I tell you these are lies. There is no mass killing. Fighting was going on and that was normal. There is fighting now in Iraq. Is there fighting without death? There is no mass killing. True, some villages were attacked or burned in reaction to other actions. When someone attacks, he strikes and loots. Another will reply to him. Such incidents forced the defenseless citizens to evacuate, but some camps were attractive even to city inhabitants because the situation in the camp is better than the situation in the city. People find free services in the camp. There are no free services in the city. There is no free medical care, free water, or free electricity. All these are available in the camp. Some people rented out their houses in the city and left for the camps.

Southern Sudan and the Possibility of Secession

Everything is possible. This depends on what can be accomplished during this period of time. If we convince the southern citizen during this period that he is a citizen enjoying all his citizenship rights, we expect the majority to say yes (to unity). If we and the brothers in the southern government and southern states fail to run the south in a manner that convinces the southern citizen that he got his rights, this might be a cause for separation. We believe that most of the southerners are for unity. Some people, however, say no. When I visited the South -- Bahr al-Ghazal and Rumbek, which was the capital of the rebel movement -- I found

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that all people in Rumbek were for unity.

We need the assistance of the international community and Arab world during this period of time in order to provide the southern citizens with services and development projects, which will allow them to make a positive decision. This is our program and this is our effort.

We, of course, have the pledge made in Oslo to extend \$4.5 billion in aid for development and services projects. If we receive these funds and carry out the

set plans and programs, there will be unity, God willing. We cannot carry out these plans depending on our capabilities no matter how large they are. The South is a vast area and there has been no development there for 50 years and 50 years ago we were under colonialism. Colonialism did not spend money to develop the country. We have a vast area that needs huge efforts. Many of the evacuees in the North or the refugees who were in neighboring Ethiopia, Kenya, and Uganda had services available to them in the refugee camps. If they return to the South today, they will not find these services there. Therefore, unless we provide these services, there will certainly be a problem.

Implementation of the CPA:

We work according to timetables on the implementation of the agreement. True, there was some delay in the implementation of some clauses of the agreement, but the delay was due to the fact that there was a period of six months before the start of the transitional period. The agreement was signed on 9 January and the transitional period began on 9 July. Much work was supposed to be done during this six-month period before the start of the transitional period. That work should have been done through joint committees between us and the Movement. The committees were supposed to come to Khartoum to do this work and finish it before the start of the transitional period, but the Movement did not send its delegations. Many people who did not know about the details of the agreement thought the delay was from the government. However, when we sit with them and explain why this was not done, they become convinced of our opinion. Some people get wrong information and begin to talk on the basis of this information. The people have heard many say that the government has not given the South its oil rights. We said we would not respond in the media. We asked officials in the federal government and the Government of the South to come and present to us at the presidency a report on the implementation of a special agreement on oil revenues. It (the CPA) is not fragile. The agreement has full details and we are committed to it. Some may try to interpret some parts, but we have implementation mechanisms. Regarding the constitution, the Justice Ministry is the term of reference. It decides if the constitution agrees or disagrees with the federal constitution. If there is disagreement, we have the Council of States, which is the upper house. This is also a term of reference. We have the commission in charge of monitoring and following up the implementation of the agreement. Accordingly, several quarters are involved in this agreement. If people disagree, they will go back to them and they will decide.

The national conference some political forces are calling for is not meant to create a base for this agreement. The base of this agreement is complete. Most people and political parties and forces fully support the agreement. Some political forces, however, say that this is a bilateral agreement and that the distribution of powers is unfair because it gives 80 percent of power to the parties signing the agreement and these are the National Congress Party and People's Movement. They want a new conference in order to cancel many points in this agreement. We do not want to violate the agreement. The 1972 agreement was excellent and well accepted. It achieved real peace in Sudan, but violating it took us 20 years back to war. It was the one which sowed some sort of suspicion in the minds of the southerners that we did not abide by agreements. Therefore, this agreement came with all details. The reason was past suspicion.

Sudan's Future:

Sudan is an Arab African country. We reject dividing Africa into Arab and black Africa or north and south of

the desert. We are now talking about a united Africa and an African Union representing all African countries. According to this concept, we find that most of the Arabs are inside Africa. Therefore, there can be no talk about Africa without the Arabs. Consequently, one cannot talk about an African unity without having ties with the Arabs. The Arabs outside Africa are linked to the Arabs in Africa. Therefore, all Arabs in and outside Africa are strongly linked to Africa. Our role is strengthening Arab-African cooperation in the interest of Africa and the Arabs.

(End text excerpts)

STEINFELD